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By LAMBERT J. FLOKSTRA

When the Lord Adds . . .

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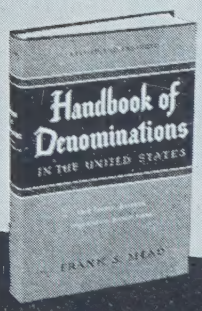

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NOTES AND LETTERS

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From Atheism to Christianity*

by Henry Zylstra

EVER SINCE C. S. Lewis entertained and instructed us with his *Screwtape Letters*, we have been aware that in this gifted writer the Anglican world had the equal in Christian apology of the Roman G. K. Chesterton. In the author of *Screwtape, Mere Christianity,* and *Pilgrim's Regress* we recognized a talent for popular Christian witness comparable in our decades only to that of the author of *Orthodoxy* and *Heretics.* Both of these men, the G.K.C. of yesterday, and the C. S. L. of today, have made many a Reformed well-wisher sigh for a Reformed writer as brilliant in his mode of address to the modern mind as these two proved to be.

C. S. Lewis is a many-sided man. There are at least three of him: the professor, the novelist, and the lay theologian. As professor of poetry, first at Oxford and lately at Cambridge, he has produced two works of solid literary scholarship, *The Allegory of Love* and *The Sixteenth Century* in the Oxford History of English Literature. As novelist, he has produced such phantasy pieces full of religious implication as *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* and such charming children's literature as *Prince Caspian* and *The Silver Chair.* And as lay theologian, as apologete, he has written *The Problem of Pain, Miracles, Christian Behaviour* and several other volumes of religious literature.

Surprised by Joy is spiritual autobiography. Lewis takes pains to point out that there is only so much of autobiography in it as is spiritual. Whatever in his life had no perceptible influence or bearing on his conversion is omitted. Nevertheless there is a good deal in the book which, although in the end it proves relevant to the conversion, seems at first reading to be generally autobiographical. The author feels that "the net has to be spread pretty wide" in the earlier chapters if we are to know, when the spiritual crises come, who and what the nature was that encountered the irresistible grace.

We can only be grateful for this net widely spread, for in this way we get all kinds of by-products as well as the principal commodity. We get, for example, a devastating indictment of the English public schools. These schools, we must recall, are the equivalent in kind to what in our own country we call the private schools. They prepare privileged boys for the university. But first Lewis went to a boarding school which he calls Belsen and describes in a chapter called Concentration Camp. Life here was made grotesquely repulsive by the mean and wrong-headed master. The boys learned nothing but a little mathematics and lived in constant misery. Lewis concludes: "Life in a vile boarding-school is in this way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to live by hope."

Later, Lewis went to a school he calls Wyvern, and it is in his account of this place that he mercilessly exposes the fagging system. According to this system, by no means limited to *Tom Brown's School Days* but extending right on into the twentieth century, the boys at the school below a particular level of seniority become the labor pool of the boys beyond that level. Let a fag show "cheek" or "side" or anything short of joyous acquiescence in the menialities of upperclass snobbery and his life is made insufferably wretched for him. The system is regularly defended as excellent Preparation for Public Life, but Lewis judges otherwise:

> *For the last thirty years or so England has been filled with a bitter, truculent, sceptical, debunking and cynical* intelligentsia . . . *Those who defend the schools will, of course, say that these Prigs are the cases which the system failed to cure; they were not kicked, mocked, fagged, flogged, and humiliated enough. But surely it is equally possible that they are the products of the system? that they were not Prigs at all when they came to their schools but were made Prigs by their first year, as I was? . . . No one is more likely to be arrogant than a lately freed slave.*

So vivid and well taken are Lewis's accounts of early twentieth century schools that they could well be made compulsory reading for education courses. One predicts that his book will live on in the literature of education quite as immortally as in the literature of conversions. Very memorable, too, are his descriptions of two of his best teachers, Old Smewgy at Wyvern (". . . he first taught me the right sensuality of poetry, how it should be savoured and mouthed in solitude"), and "Kirk" at Bookham ("The idea that human beings should exercise their vocal organs for any purpose other than that of communicating or discovering truth was to him prepos-

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* A review of *Surprised by Joy*, by C. S. Lewis (Harcourt, Brace. 238 pp. $3.50).

From Atheism to Christianity — Continued

terous"). Kirkpatrick pushed Lewis directly into the body of the *Iliad,* translating a hundred lines at a time for his pupil and then telling him, be it with benefit of Crusius's *Lexicon,* to go it on his own. It worked:

> *The great gain was that I very soon became able to understand a great deal without . . . translating it; I was beginning to think in Greek. That is the great Rubicon to cross in any language. Those in whom the Greek word lives only while they are hunting for it in the lexicon, and who then substitute the English word for it, are not reading the Greek at all; they are only solving a puzzle.*

SUCH COMMENTS on education, and on many fascinating subjects besides, are, however, secondary to the main interest of the book. The primary interest is the tale, as Lewis tells it, of "how I passed from Atheism to Christianity. . . ." It may be that *Surprised by Joy* will become a classic in the conversion literature of the world. It has much of the candor and matter-of-fact objectivity of Newman's *Apologia.* It testifies of "a superabundance of mercy" as tellingly as *Grace Abounding.* It is Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* experienced in a life: his harness piece by piece was hewn from him until he waited Love's uplifted stroke. God closed in on him:

> *In the Trinity Term of* 1929 *I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape?*

That was the destination. But what of the way thither? How did it all go, and what was the mode of this futile escaping from the tremendous Lover?

This retelling cannot be the original tale, nor this review the book it reviews. But here follow some of the arches of the years down which the fleeing sinner sped. To begin, he had long ago, as a child, been stabbed by the pangs of desire, been touched by the eternal, been seized upon by joy. The occasions of this visitation were slight: a brother's moss garden, Beatrix Potter's *Squirrel Nutkin,* and *Longfellow's* translated lines

> *I heard a voice that cried,*
> *Balder the beautiful*
> *Is dead, is dead —*

He felt the "inconsolable longing" of this joy again about the time of his going to Wyvern. The provocation this time was Arthur Rackham's illustration of the Wagnerian *Twilight of the Gods.* And to this class of his experiences, which he describes somewhere as being "of another dimension," belongs also his reading of George MacDonald's *Phantastes* ("I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged").

There is much in this concern for joy, and in this preoccupation with the hints and premonitions of glory, which reminds of Wordsworth. What is one to make of these extraordinary experiences, these flashes of mystical vision? Two things, perhaps, we can say: First that they are not quite illusory, that there is in them indeed "something very like adoration," and next that without the fulfillment of God's self-revelation in Christ as confirmed by faith they are, as Lewis allows, "not very important." Wordsworth deplored the fleeing of the visionary gleam, complained that there had passed away a glory from the earth, and he thereupon moved closer to theistic realism. Lewis, too, takes a more tempered view of his mystical insights after his recall to God:

> *I believe that the old stab . . . has come to me as often and as sharply since my conversion as at any time of my life whatever. But I now know that the experience . . . had never had the kind of importance I once gave it. It was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer. While the other was in doubt, the pointer naturally loomed large in my thoughts.*

At his home as a child in Belfast, Ireland, Lewis was taught "the usual things and made to say . . . prayers and in due time taken to church." However, it was in the misery of his life at that first boarding school that he had his first "religious" period. Prompted by fear, perhaps, as much as by anything, he took to serious Bible reading and to prayers. Because he was scrupulous to a fault about "realizing" his petitions, the prayers became a "nagging" burden, and it eased him later to have done with the whole obligation. At Wyvern the matron was a woman "floundering in the mazes" of Occultist tradition. The "vagueness" and "speculative character" of this Higher Thought seeped into the dykes of his boyhood creed. It was a delicious relief: "There was nothing to be obeyed. . . ."

THE ENEMY had him started now. The next step is his reading of the classics. Those of us who are the friends of the classics are loathe to record the datum that these caused him doubt. Still, it was not the fact that the classics were taught that caused the trouble; it was the fact that they were taught

wrong. The religion in them *was always presented as nonsense.* That *fostered* the scepticism:

> *Here, especially in Virgil, one was presented with a mass of religious ideas; and all teachers and editors took it for granted . . . that these religious ideas were sheer illusion. No one ever attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism pre-figured Christianity. The accepted position seemed to be that religions were normally a mere farrago of nonsense. . . .*

Moreover, Lewis had by now developed a kind of pessimism, something perhaps more psychologically than rationally rooted, a "settled expectation that everything would do what you did not want it to do."

He was confirmed in his scepticism by a number of forces. There was, for example, that teacher Kirkpatrick, a master dialectician, who, had he lived a little later, "would have been a Logical Positivist." This man provided fresh ammunition for Lewis's own Rationalism. The Materialist universe was altogether a comfortable kind of place. In it you were at worst dealing with "limited liabilities." You could at a pinch choose to step out of it with impunity. It was not so in the Christian universe: "Christianity placed at the center . . . a transcendental Interferer." And Lewis in his "monstrous individualism" was trying to stake off a claim that would permit of No Admittance.

However, the strong feet were following after, and the Divine preparation for a change of heart was beginning in the mind. There was, for instance, that vexing logical inconsistency between his Positivism and his religious Romanticism. His reading of the poet Yeats troubled him: here was a man, not a Christian, who wanted nothing to do with Rationalism and Materialism, and offered a kind of magic as alternative. Lewis was beginning to find that a "young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading." Chesterton's *Everlasting Man* put him off his poise and MacDonald's *Phantastes* restored something of that old visionary gleam. Now he consulted Idealism and the English Hegelians. He saw their Absolute but could not love it. Smaller things began mounting up.

It was so, as Lewis puts it, that "the great Angler played His fish." The labyrinthine ways were running out. The hardest boiled of atheists, he says, confirmed the historicity of the Gospels in his presence: "All that stuff of Frazer's," the man had said, "about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once." From Atheism to Idealism to Theism to Christianity. Those were the steps:

> *Every step I had taken, from the Absolute to "Spirit" and from "Spirit" to "God," had been a step towards the more concrete, the more imminent, the more compulsive.*

Finally there was the decision, freely made, and yet made for him. "I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we sat out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did."

Lewis is right: "The words *compelle intrare,* compel them to come in . . . they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy."

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With this issue the *Journal* takes on a new appearance, and continues its attempt to serve Reformed communities across the nation by pointing out and commenting upon what is relevant and timely in Church and society.

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The Church With An Open Door

by J. D. Eppinga

"... *I have set before thee an open door.*" —REV. 3:8

A FEW WEEKS AGO, while visiting Palm Beach, Florida, my family and I stopped at about nine o'clock in the evening to see a very interesting church. Its name, Bethesda-by-the-Sea, was a beautiful name, and it was a beautiful church. Its tower was stately and its windows were cut in worshipful Gothic lines. The grounds surrounding this house of praise were very ample indeed. There were gardens with foot-paths, a fountain gurgling peacefully, and a churchyard surrounded by a portico on the floor of which the lights had contrived to throw the lengthened shadow of a cross. A few lights burned in the parish house where the choir was in rehearsal. The song they sang was The Lord's Prayer. And as we walked through that churchyard, and beneath those porticos, and along the foot-paths in the softness of the night — hearing all the while the singing voices of that choir — it seemed that we were not walking upon this earth at all, but rather in the land where Jesus is.

Naturally, after such an experience, we wanted also to enter that sanctuary. Having seen it all on the outside, we wished for a glimpse of the inside. At that point, however, we were frustrated. Sad to say, the doors were locked. And I think I shall not soon forget the sense of disappointment which overcame us when we found that we could not get in. There is something about a church with locked doors that seems wrong altogether.

A few miles down the road, almost at the center of Palm Beach, we saw another church. It was not as beautiful as Bethesda-by-the-Sea, but it too was attractive. It was a Roman Catholic church. We thought we would step inside for just a moment, and we did. It was ten o'clock in the evening, but the doors were open. I enjoyed the brief moment in that sanctuary. Outside there was the noise, the traffic, the clicking of hurrying heels on the sidewalks. But inside there was a stillness that seemed vast and even infinite. And as I left through the open doors, I recalled those others that were not open, and I thought: There is something about a church with open doors that is right altogether.

I CAN CALL to mind no congregation that has called itself the church of the closed door, but every city, I suppose, has at least one church that calls itself the church of the open door. And when we come to think of churches with open doors, it is not long before a certain church comes to mind, the church, namely, that is mentioned in Revelation, chapter three. It is the church of Philadelphia. It had kept the Word. It had not denied the name of Christ. And Christ, in words of warm approval and of unreserved commendation, said to it: *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door.*

Who was it that set an open door before this church? We know the answer. It was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Think of that: The Lord of Lords and King of Kings as a doorman. If ever I should have the privilege of walking along with the President of the United States and we came to a door together, I should see to it that I was the one to open it for him. Certainly any subject of the Queen of England would consider it a great honor to be able to open a door for her. This opening of doors is a gesture of social courtesy by which we show deference to each other.

Suppose now that Jesus should actually come to walk the streets of our city, entering houses everywhere. Suppose he were to go to our municipal buildings, our church buildings, our houses of business in order to enter them. Would he have to touch a door anywhere? Would we not be running ahead of him all the while, stumbling over each other, in our efforts to be the first to open the door? Suppose, further, that you and he should come to a door together, and that he, not you but he, should open it. Would you go through? Would you not rather say, Not so, my Lord. Surely the words of Peter would come to your mind. You wash my feet? Never. But that is the kind of Lord we have. *He* washes the feet of his disciples. *He* opens the doors for us.

He opened the door of heaven for us. It was closed, for man had sinned, and because he had sinned, man was escorted out of Paradise. The

doors were closed. An angel with a flaming sword was placed on guard. Nothing that man could ever do or hope to do would open those doors for him again. But what man could not do Christ accomplished. It took great suffering and great sacrifice on his part. It meant leaving his Father's house and walking the road that led to Calvary. But this he did, and all to open heaven's door for us and to escort us through. True, we would not want him to open a door for us. But in a deep and significant sense that precisely is what he did.

JUST AS HE opens doors for us as individuals, he also sets open doors before the Church, his Bride. We may wonder sometimes how it is that the Church has been able to keep going steadily on for these nineteen hundred years. After all, there are many doors in the corridors of time, and they are not all open. The world has seen nation after nation, and organization after organization — many of them powerful and many of them great and large — that have sooner or later come to doors which they could not open. There they were brought to a standstill. Not so the Church of Jesus Christ.

We are all familiar in our time with what are known as automatic doors. One has only to approach them. By means of some photo-electric cell or pressure pad upon the floor they respond to one's coming as though they were moved by an unseen hand. That is but an illustration, and it may be an over-simplification, but something like that is what the Church has been experiencing throughout history. Many a time the doors were opened as by an unseen hand. It was the hand of Jesus.

There was that time when women walked to the tomb in the early morning air and worried about who should roll the stone away. It was a heavy stone. So the Church has sometimes wondered, as it walked a piece of the road of history and came to a door, huge, oaken, and heavy, its hinges rusted with the rust of hell, how the barrier was to give way. But the Lord Jesus was there, going on before, going through the door with his resurrection body, and then opening it so that his Church might follow through. Who was it that opened the door of the Roman Empire? That one was heavy and it was locked. Who opened the door to Europe, to the British Isles, to America, to Africa? Who opened the door to China and to India? Was there human hand anywhere that was strong enough to do it?

Surely the world will not open any doors for us. Think of those words: The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. Those gates of hell are doors, doors which Satan would set up everywhere to impede the progress of the Church. No, the world will open no doors for us. We speak sometimes of having doors slammed in our faces. That is what the world does. It slams doors in the face of the Church. Who opens them all? Mark those words to the church of Philadelphia: . . . *I have set before thee an open door.* Christ can do it. He can open any door ever confronted in history. Consider how he introduces himself to the Philadelphia church: *These things saith he . . . that hath the key of David.* That is the key of royalty. Consider again: *These things saith he . . . that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.* That means power. How good it is to be with someone who, as we say, has the key to things! How good it is to be with someone who can open all the doors! How good it is to be with Christ!

IF NOW WE ASK for whom this door was opened at Philadelphia, the answer must first of all be that it was for a church that was weak. We read it plainly in verse eight: *Thou hast little strength,* or, as another version has it, *Thou hast small power.* The reference of this cannot be to spiritual strength, for that was not small; indeed, the church excelled on that count. The reference, therefore, must be to its size, to its limited membership. Philadelphia was a small church, and sometimes the thought came to them that they could not amount to much, could not do much. It is a thought which sometimes occurs to our Christian Reformed denomination too: What can we do; we are just a drop in the bucket? But when we think thus we must count the times in history when God chose to work through the *one* rather than through the *many.* We must note the times in history when God has worked through minorities rather than majorities. And something of this Divine technique shines through God's message to the church at Philadelphia. He places an open door before a very small group.

The church at Philadelphia was not only a small church, but also a church whose place among the people of God was being denied. We read of that in verse nine. There were some in the church, Jews we are told, who held that they only as the descendants of Abraham were the Israel of God. For some of the other churches there was opposition from without. For this church the opposition came from within as well. That is always the worst kind of opposition.

The church at Philadelphia, then, was a church that was small and a church whose status was being challenged from within. Moreover, it had a further difficulty. As we read the message of Christ to this congregation we learn that there were those who were shutting doors to this church, barring them, in other words, from possibilities they thought were theirs. They felt hemmed in on all sides. The church was small. It was opposed. And now there were those who closed doors to them every time they tried to move. They felt the suffocating con-

The Church With an Open Door — Continued

finement of claustrophobia. And so it was that Christ came to them to liberate them: *behold I have set before thee an open door.* They had always had it, but because of the smallness, and the opposition, and the barriers, they had lost sight of it. They needed to be reminded of it then. Accordingly, Christ spoke to them as he did.

That circumstance reminds us of our own situation in the early 1930's. In those days we spoke, too readily and too often, of an *oversupply.* We were graduating men from the seminary and we did not know where to put them. There were no opportunities, we said. We spoke as though there were no more doors for us to go through, no more doors that were open to us. We felt we had reached our limits. We did not know it, but there were doors that were open for us. We can see it now, in the light of subsequent developments. When our hindsight operates, we can see that the Church has always had open doors. Would that our foresight were just as good! Would that we could see the doors ahead of us, giving way to our touch, as well as the doors behind us that we have come through.

CHRIST opens the door. He opens it for the Church. And where now does it lead? How shall we answer that question? Shall we speak in generalities and say that the door leads to a vast and unpredictable future? It would be a typically American way of answering, and it would be no less true, if we said that the open door of the Church leads to opportunity. But a better and more particular answer is to say that the door is opened for the preaching of the Word. That is where it leads. There is a great vacuum in the lives of people. Their hearts are empty and their hearts are hungry. That is an open door for the Church to go through with the words of Jesus. There are many who are destitute and in want, ill and in need. That is an open door for the Church to go through with the hands and feet of Jesus. There are philosophies and teachings and there are dogmas straight from hell. And that is an open door for the Church to go through with the sword of Christ.

Our church, too, each of our churches and our church as a whole, has the open door, and we must go through it. Once Paul wrote: *I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost for a great door and effectual is opened unto me.* We shudder to ask, What if he had not gone through that door? At another time, he wrote: *When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, a door was opened unto me of the Lord.* And again we ask, What if he had not gone through? When Christ opens the door, it is for us to go through. When Christ opens the door, it is for us to move on. When Christ opens the door he creates for us the responsibility of progress. When Christ opens the door he wants his Church from that moment on to be outgoing in all its actions and programs.

Our church is on the threshold of its centennial. We shall be observing that centennial in a day and in a time when the opportunities for the Church of Jesus Christ have never been greater. The doors have never stood open so widely as they do today. May God help us to seize the opportunities and to move on through the doors he has opened to us.

Effective College Teaching

by Lambert J. Flokstra

WHAT IS TEACHING? Teaching is an art. The late William Lyon Phelps describes it as an art so great and so difficult to master that a man or woman can spend a long life at it, without realizing much more than his limitations and mistakes and his distance from the ideal.

Some would contend that since teaching is an art it cannot be taught. "Art is caught not taught." This slogan states a half-truth which can be dangerously misapplied. Though it is true that the vital personal artistry and radiance of the teacher is a dynamic force in good teaching, it is equally true that a thoughtful and reasoned reflection on the various elements that go into the art of teaching is stimulating and rewarding.

What are some of the factors or elements that must be considered in reflecting upon effective college teaching? In teaching we are concerned among other things with a goal or purpose, with subject matter, with the teacher, with the student, and with administration. In this article I shall comment on the first two of these things — the goal and the subject matter.

GOOD teaching presupposes a goal or purpose. A basic ideal as to the nature of man and his mis-

sion in the world and a high sense of dedication to the ideal is a prerequisite for effective college teaching. It is precisely at this point that higher education in this country is confused and bewildered. Instead of giving leadership in our present-day chaotic culture, it shares the cultural disorder of our times. What is even worse is that most of the colleges and universities in our day refuse to face critically and intelligently issues concerning the positive moral and spiritual values needed for individual living. Questions such as, "How shall a man live?" "What is the chief end of man?" are conveniently by-passed or ignored. The disappointing results of this ostrich policy are all too obvious. Unwilling to face questions of ends or purposes, colleges and universities have become bogged in the mire of means and techniques. The emphasis in our schools is on the know-how instead of the know-what and know-why.

This neglect of the study of the individual man as a person has further led to an undue preoccupation with man in the mass. We should, so we are told, condition the attitude of the mass mind in favor of social reform and improvement. "Teachers should make a conscious effort, both by the selection of material included in their courses and by their manner of handling it, to make clear to their pupils how a modern society is run and organized." Under such slogans as *education for adjustment, education for the future, education for citizenship* and the like, there has been a stress on conditioning in terms of right social attitudes and proper social techniques and social action. The extensive National Education Association study on "Education for all American Youth" (1944) regards the school as a social service agency which should study the immediate needs of the group, and it specifies these needs, among others, as the sociological ones of job, family life, and practice in democratic living. The report of the President's Commission on Higher Education (1947) stresses the same idea when it proposes that liberal education should be replaced by general education "with content that is directly relevant to the demands of contemporary society." Whether contemporary society asks the basic relevant questions as to the nature of man and society is a matter that is not considered. This prevailing view is based upon that of Rousseau, who held that evil does not reside in individuals but that it arises out of bad society arrangements. This emphasis on social orientation and adjustment is far removed from Plato's claim that education is concerned with the art of converting the reason from the knowledge and love of what is mean to the knowledge and love of what is worthy. It is a virtual denial of Plato's dictum that "states are made, not from rocks and trees, but from the characters of their citizens which turn the scale and draw everything after them." In spite of what our modern educationist conditioners may say, it remains true that fundamentally the political and social problem is a problem of human character in the first instance. (Cf. James 4:1).

What this shift of emphasis from the individual person to sociological man has brought about is a new temper of mind, a new *Zeitgeist*, which has been so clearly delineated by Dr. Dirk Jellema in the March, April and May issues of *The Reformed Journal* of last year.

In contrast to these prevailing trends in higher education the aim of education at Calvin College is to train young people to become mature, responsible, and intelligent citizens of the kingdom of God, a kingdom in which Christ is King. Accepting God's special revelation as a guide, and using all of nature (God's revelation in nature) and all of culture (God's revelation in the cultural and historical process) as a medium, our task is to make meaningful to the student the nature of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

To state the aim as I have just done is relatively easy. To develop the implications of this aim for the hierarchy of knowledge, for the curriculum as a whole, for the selection and organization of courses, for teaching procedures, and for counseling and guidance of students and for discipline is a stupendous task, one which demands continuous thought and discussion in our academic community and calls for constant refinement. What is sorely needed is that the implications become explications. A Calvin Report, similar in range or scope to the Harvard report on *General Education in a Free Society,* in which a group of our outstanding scholars and educators develop concretely and specifically the meaning and character of Christian Education, should be forthcoming in the not too distant future. If our commitment to Christian education is to be intelligent rather than sentimental and verbalistic, something of this sort needs doing. A fine beginning in this direction has been made in the faculty junior college report which appeared some years ago but which, I am afraid, has not received the scrutiny and discussion it deserves.

In this connection I heartily endorse Professor W. H. Jellema's recent call for a Christian university (*The Reformed Journal,* Sept., Nov., 1955, Jan., 1956). Our most immediate need is not for a graduate school granting advanced degrees. What we need is a community of scholars who by study, research, discourse, and exchange of ideas devote themselves to the development and continuous reexamination of the methods, content and organization of Christian education. The publication of the product of their thought and reflection would give leadership and a sense of direction to our entire system of Christian education.

Effective College Teaching —Continued

A SECOND element in a teaching situation concerns the subject matter we teach. "What shall we teach?" is a question teachers face every day. At this point someone might object and say, "The good teacher does not teach subject, but students. What we are concerned with in good teaching is the development of the whole man — intellectual, volitional and emotional — and since the emotionalized attitudes are so dominant in human living these should be one of our major concerns in teaching." It seems to me that this reasoning is confusing in that it sets up false alternatives. The fact of the matter is that the good teacher teaches subject matter *to* students. Teaching is the imparting of knowledge, the communication of ideas. To teach a student you must teach him something. And that something is subject matter. And what about the teaching of attitudes? Frankly, I would not know how to go about teaching an attitude. Not that attitudes are unimportant in teaching. But these are gradually built up in the students in the process of good teaching. They are the by-products, the concomitants of good teaching. In this connection, it is well to remember that one of the chief criticisms to be directed against the contemporary sociological view of education is that it aims to condition the attitudes of students rather than to cultivate the mind and intelligence.

This brings us back to the question, "What subject matter shall we teach?" There are many educationists who believe that it makes no difference what we teach. To them all subjects in our democratic schools are of equal rank. What is important is the spirit in which a subject is taught. A teacher gifted with vision, imagination and enthusiasm can make any subject live for the pupil. The absurdity of this point of view becomes obvious when one but suggests that comic books be substituted for Elizabethan drama.

It is simply a fact that some subjects are of more worth than others and should be central in the college curriculum. In their ensemble they constitute what has been variously labeled as the cultural subjects, the liberal studies, the humanities, the classics, the liberating arts. But these labels are vague generalizations, have been variously interpreted, and do not get at the heart of the matter. What are the distinguishing traits of these subjects?

First of all, the liberal studies are deeply concerned with a critical study of the nature of man. They deal not with the technological man, not with the mass man, but with the constants and norms of human living and civilization, with human nature, which in its essence never changes but is perennially the same. The goal is that of forming a conception of man at his greatest and best.

In the second place a disciplined study of the liberating arts produces in the student a cultivated intelligence, a versatility of mind, which makes him strong and free. Though practicality and effectiveness are not the direct aims of the liberating arts, the mental development they engender in the student qualifies him for effective knowledge and judgment in whatever work or occupation he undertakes. It is said of William Ewart Gladstone, the great Parliamentarian, the man of practical politics and public finance, that he "habitually lived day by day in communion with the highest peaks of the human spirit." One might even question whether John Dewey, who is perhaps more responsible for the decline of liberal learning than any other individual, would have been as effective in his opposition to the traditional theories in education if his mind had not been sharpened and disciplined by the liberal education he received in his formative years.

A third and closely related characteristic is a sense of detachment, a love of study for its cultural value rather than for its practical application. Immediate and specialized preparation for vocational pursuits is not the goal.

Finally, liberal arts education aims to give the student a general synoptic view of man and reality, to provide him with a sense of proportion, to teach him to see life steadily and to see it whole. Hence its aversion to premature specialization and vocationalism. But this liberal education is not to be confused with general education so much in vogue in the colleges of today. The latter aims to provide a wide curriculum in which many fields of human knowledge are studied superficially. The result is all too frequently dilettantism and shallowness. Liberal education is opposed to the overexpanded and cluttered curriculum with its resultant cursory view of knowledge. It recognizes that true education is intensive and selective and sees to it that the student applies himself to a few studies so thoroughly that he not only understands what true knowledge is but also learns how much concentration, precision, and discipline are needed in the pursuit of knowledge. Thus equipped with a cultivated intelligence and a thirst for knowledge, the student will sense that his education does not terminate at the end of formal schooling but is a lifelong process.

Such are some of the characteristics of the liberating arts which should be the heart of the college curriculum and should be used in the forming and moulding of the citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. Whatever other subjects may be added should be viewed as accessory and subordinate to these central studies and should contribute to the enrichment of the central theme.

When the Lord Adds . . . Let None Subtract

by James Daane

THE LAWYERS of the New Testament were religious lawyers who made a career of studying the law of Moses. It is the more strange therefore that they did not know who their neighbors were. Believing that only *some* of their fellows were neighbors, they could not identify these. Loving the neighbors therefore became an impossibility. And the impossibility was used as a justification for the failure.

This strange ethical situation is illustrated by the story of "a certain lawyer" (Luke 10). This lawyer tried to put Jesus in a corner with a tricky question, but instead found himself cornered when Jesus induced him to answer his own tricky question with an admission that he ought to love his neighbor. Then he, "desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" Thinking that the neighbor could not be identified, he justified his failure to keep the Mosaic command.

Why could not authorized leaders of the Jewish church identify their neighbor? Our Lord gives the answer when at the conclusion of the story of the Good Samaritan he commands the lawyer, "Go, and do thou likewise." *To recognize a neighbor, one must be a neighbor.* The neighbor *as neighbor* is visible only to the eyes of love. Where love is present, there the question, Who is my neighbor? is not asked. For love knows the answer.

The lawyer was without love, or what is to say the same thing, he was not a neighbor. Loveless and unneighborly, he could not begin to keep or even to understand the Law of Moses.

A Fresh Movement of the Spirit

During the last twenty-five years Christian Reformed churches have shown an increasing love for their neighbors. This larger love has quickened a new and larger obedience to the Lord's command to preach the gospel to the unchurched. These churches are no longer content to meet merely their own religious needs. Alongside the instinctive impulse for self-preservation, there has emerged a reflective Christian concern for the world of lost men.

No longer looking only to their own things but also to the things of others, our churches have begun to face outward. This looking out toward the world indicates a rebirth of responsible concern and of compassion for those living outside the fellowship of the Church. Our churches are beginning to be willing to imperil some of the things they hold dear in order to be instruments in the hand of God for the salvation of others. What this means I hope to make plain later. At this point it is enough to acknowledge that this emerging sense of mission and love for the lost is a movement of the Spirit in our churches. This wholesome redirection of outlook is a work of the Lord, a gift of his grace, and a reason for gratitude.

Not that we have already attained. By this I do not mean that we are not yet perfect — a noble admission which can be so easily used to cover up an ignoble unconcern for one's imperfections! I mean rather that we have not yet rendered that degree of obedience to Christ's command to preach the gospel to the lost that can be expected even from a church still located in a sinful world.

What restrains this movement of the Spirit in our churches? What holds back the larger stream of obedience to our Lord's last command? The answer I think can be put this way: Our churches have not yet adequately learned the lesson Jesus sought to teach a certain lawyer, namely, that they must themselves be neighborly. A church must herself be a neighbor, if she is to love her neighbor with her gospel. Our churches do not yet adequately understand that the obligation to be a neighbor, and hence to act neighborly, is rooted in the very nature of the Church and in the very nature of gospel proclamation.

What prevents this fresh movement of new obedience to our Lord's last command from coming full tide? The answer can also be put this way: With the increasing awareness of the obligation to preach the gospel to the man next door, there is arising a parallel and also increasing awareness of the dangers involved for the churches. Our churches stand at the point where they are hesitant about loving

the man next door, hesitant about rendering wholehearted obedience to the Lord's last command, because seeing the dangers involved they hesitate to face them squarely and commit their future into the hands of the Lord of the Church.

I shall seek to answer this single question in both of the forms indicated above.

But before I do so, I should like first to indicate the hesitancy of our churches in the past to be a neighbor and to preach the gospel to the neighbor.

Neighborly — From a Distance

Christian Reformed churches have in the past done mission work, but most of it by far has been done in faraway places, rather than to the man next door. We have addressed the gospel to the man at a distance, to the Chinese a half-world away, to the man in Africa, to the Indian on the Reservation, rather than to the man closest to us. We have tried harder to preach the gospel in a strange tongue than in our mother tongue. We have been more determined that the man who does not understand our language should hear the gospel from our lips, than that he who speaks our language should hear it from us. In reaching out with the gospel we have strangely tried to reach the man hardest to reach, while largely ignoring him who is easiest to reach — and only of late has this strange procedure begun to appear strange. While saying nothing to the person next door, we crossed land and sea to speak to someone who does not understand us. We have more loved him whom we have not seen, than him whom we see daily. We have preached at great cost to the man with the strange sounding name in the strange sounding place, but proffered only silence to the man who hears our congregational singing every Sunday. We have prayed fervently for the Negro whose address is Africa, but unmovingly, if indeed at all, for the Negro whose address is Alabama. We have been mission-minded about Americans, but only of the Indian down on the Reservation. In short, until about twenty-five years ago, we engaged in "foreign missions" rather than "home missions"; we tried to make ourselves a neighbor to the foreign man in a foreign land with a foreign tongue, without being a neighbor to the neighbor next door; we tried to be neighborly to those whom *we* tried to make our neighbors, rather than to the man whom God had made our neighbor.

This is the situation that is changing because of the movement of the Spirit in our churches. The mission situation is being brought closer to home. In the last quarter century Christian Reformed churches have built many a "mission station" and "mission chapel." *But it still has not arrived at home.* We still do missions at arm's length; we still do it "over here" or "over there," but not at our own church address. Our churches are not yet themselves instruments of missions. The churches pray rather than perform, they support missions rather than do missions. The churches possess missions, when they ought rather to be possessed by a sense of mission. Our churches create mission situations — over here and over there — without regarding the very situation in which they live as a mission situation given by God.

In recent years the mission situation has indeed been brought closer to home, closer to the church's own address and situation. But it is worthy of our notice and careful consideration that as the situation is being brought closer to home, the awareness of the dangers involved for the churches and the fear of their future becomes more and more acute. Fear of what may happen to our churches if they become neighborly with their gospel and bring in converts from the neighborhood has led to the incredible conclusion that a church cannot herself be a "mission station," an instrument in the hand of God for the execution of the missionary task of preaching the gospel to every creature. Thus fear has led to a definition of the church which is the exact opposite of that given by the New Testament — thereby creating a situation in which what is church may easily become merely sectarian. This fear of what may happen to our churches is becoming sharper and more vocal as our churches moved by the Spirit are led to bring the mission situation and its execution closer and closer to our churches.

This fear of what may happen to us is not wrought out of the fabric of pure imagination. If every Christian Reformed church became an instrument of the missionary task, some things would change, and not every change would be for the better. Let this be granted. But let it also be recognized that until we bring the mission task and its execution right to the heart of the local congregation, the movement of the Spirit in our churches to bring us into full obedience to the command of our Lord will not come full tide. This fear must be overcome, but we will not escape being victimized by this unholy fear unless we regain the biblical idea of the Church, namely, that she must be a neighbor to her neighbors. The courage to be the Church, the voice of the gospel to those who are near as well as to those who are afar, will be lacking and its place taken by fear until our churches more fully understand the nature both of the Church and of the gospel. When this is understood, then in the daring of faith and the spirit of self-sacrifice born of love, the churches will both dare and feel obligated to offer both her gospel and herself to the man next door — and not merely to the foreign man in a foreign land where not even ten thousand converts

could imperil anything the faraway church holds dear. In short, this fear is not cut whole out of pure imagination. Nevertheless, we ought not to allow this fear to dictate our theology of the Church, nor ought we to allow it to determine what is the task of the Church. Not fear but the Bible is the source of our knowledge and the guide for our action.

In Offering Christ the Church also Offers Herself

What hinders the growing obedience of our churches to the Lord's missionary command from coming full tide? As stated above, that which hinders is the failure of our churches to learn that they must be neighborly. They have not yet adequately learned the lesson that a church must *be* a neighbor. Only by *being* a neighbor, only by *loving* the neighbor, will a church be moved to preach the gospel to her neighbor, to the one next door whom God has made her neighbor. The notion that we must have something less than a Christian love, namely, the love of Christ himself, for our sinful neighbor has done much to lead the churches to be less than neighbor to her neighbors.

What is a neighbor? A neighbor is one who recognizes that the other man has, under God, a claim upon his love, upon his very self, and who, in obedience to God, gives himself in love to the other man according to the measure of this claim. He *is* a neighbor who, under God, offers himself in love to his neighbor.

What is it to preach? What happens when the Church preaches the gospel? Essentially the same thing happens. In preaching the gospel the Church offers herself, her love, her fellowship, her communion, her baptism to the other man, upon the condition of repentance and faith. In offering Christ, she offers herself. In offering baptism into Christ, she offers baptism into the fellowship of the Church. For the Christ she offers is the Head of which she is the Body. Because the Head cannot be separated from the Body, Christ from the Church, therefore the Church cannot offer Christ and his love without at the same time and by the same act offering her ownself and her own love! Thus in preaching the gospel to the lost the Church is being a neighbor par excellence; in offering Christ and his love she thereby also recognizes and meets the claim which the hearer, under God, has upon her and her love.

A church which, upon the conditions of faith and repentance, offers Christ but does not (on the same conditions of course) offer herself, which offers Christ's love but not her love, Christ's fellowship but not her fellowship, is not truly preaching Christ and his gospel. For there is no Christ except the one who has so united himself to the Church, that the Church cannot offer him without offering herself. A church cannot in love offer Christ to the lost without at the same time and in the very same act offer herself. *She cannot offer Christ and withhold herself.* She cannot offer baptism into Christ without, at the same time and by the very same act, offering baptism into her fellowship. The offering of Christ to the lost and the church's offer of herself are as inseparable as two sides of a coin. When either happens, both happen; when one does not happen, neither happens.

When a church offers and gives Christ, she offers and gives herself. Very concretely this means that when a man is converted and accepts Christ, he must also be accepted by the church, for in offering Christ she has offered herself. For a church — any church — to bring a lost sinner to faith in Christ and then refuse him baptism and entrance into her fellowship is to tear asunder what God has joined together. Faith and baptism, according to God's ordinance, belong together. No church may in the interest of maintaining spiritual standards higher than those which are usually found in new converts, withhold herself, refuse her baptism, and send such converts to another church. The sending away of converts whom she herself has brought to Christ would be painful evidence that such a church lacked love, did not truly preach Christ, did not really mean what she said when she preached Christ. It would also raise the question whether such a church was truly a church or something else — a sect perhaps, or a semi-private religious society.

It is inherently impossible for a church to preach the gospel to the lost, if in offering Christ she is not truly willing in that very act to offer also herself. If she is unwilling to do the latter, she will soon not be doing the former. If she is unwilling to offer herself, her love, her fellowship, her sacraments to any convert the Lord brings to the Cross through her missionary effort, she will soon cease to be — or never become — a mission-minded church. A church either offers with genuine love and zeal both Christ and herself, or in the end she offers neither. To do the one and not the other is as impossible as to square the circle.

The Truth about the Church Is Part of the Gospel

Why is it inherently impossible for a church to offer Christ without offering herself? *Because the existence and reality of the Church is a part of the gospel a church proclaims.*

We may begin by saying that the Church is the product of the Resurrection. The Church, the brotherhood of love, the fellowship of the saints, her sacrament and her offices, is God's new creation wrought by the power of the Resurrection. The reality of the Church, her very existence in the world, is a witness to the Resurrection, a declaration that Christ has broken the power of sin and

triumphed over death. That such a society of men, such a fellowship of love, as described in the New Testament and designated as the Church exists at all, proclaims by its very existence that central affirmation of New Testament faith that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

But the existence and reality of the Church is not merely a *witness* to the truth which she preaches. *Rather she is herself a part of the truth which she proclaims. Her existence and reality is itself a part of the Good News.*

We have seen above that Christ the Head is so united to the Church his Body that the Church cannot offer Christ without offering herself. More light falls on this same truth when we observe that the truth of the existence and reality of the Church is itself a part of the Truth which the Church proclaims to the lost. In bearing witness to her Resurrected Lord she cannot help but bear witness to her own reality as God's new creation wrought by God in the living Christ. Her very existence is part of the gospel. By virtue of the creative power of the Spirit of the risen Lord the Church herself is a concrete, historical embodiment of the gospel. It was not mere poetic impulse which prompted Paul to speak of his churches as "living epistles." The truth about the Church is so much a part of the truth of the gospel that Jesus in his high-priestly prayer could express the thought that the disunity of the churches can be, and is, a hindrance to the world's acceptance of the gospel. And to say no more, just because the truth of the Church's existence and reality is an essential part of the gospel, the Apostles were commanded to tarry until Pentecost, *i.e.*, when the Church was to be constituted as the Church, *i.e.*, as the New Testament witness, both by its reality and its voice, to the crucified but living Lord. And if it seems strange to us that the truth of the Church's existence is a part of the Faith the Church proclaims, then we need only remind ourselves that the truth about the existence and reality of the Church is contained in the Apostles' Creed, the short sum of that which the Church believes, confesses, and preaches.

If then the Church offers the whole gospel, if she presents the Christ of the Gospel, then in so doing it is clear that she also, and unavoidably, offers and presents herself to the lost in her mission proclamation. She cannot offer Christ and withhold herself. Only in the degree that she offers herself in offering Christ does she also offer Christ. Preaching therefore is no heartless, loveless, mechanical function. It is an act of love in which the Church offers herself when she offers Christ to the lost sinner. The Church cannot preach Christ while holding herself aloof. She cannot in honesty and integrity offer a lost sinner Christ and baptism into his fellowship with the mental reservation that if the sinner turns to Christ she then may or may not, depending on matters of "quality" and "high spiritual standards" grant him baptism and entrance into her fellowship and love. Christ is not thus truly preached. Preaching Christ with such mental reservations is one form of religious hypocrisy. When a church — any church — harbors these mental reservations about the acceptance of possible converts when she preaches the gospel to lost sinners, she does not wholly mean what she says.

When the Lord Adds . . .

When the Lord through the mission efforts of a church adds such as are being saved, no church has a right to subtract by selecting and accepting some and rejecting others. She must be willing to live by the truth that when she offers Christ she also offers herself, and be willing to live by the consequence that when Christ is accepted she has also been accepted. And if after the converted sinner accepts both, she then withholds herself (her fellowship, her baptism) it is then painfully clear that she has all the while been hesitant about loving her neighbor and has been preaching the gospel with her tongue in her cheek. Where this situation obtains, a church will have little missionary concern for her neighbor and will never be a clear articulate voice of the gospel to the man next door. For true love does not hesitate to offer itself when it offers Christ; nor does it hesitate to accept him whom Christ accepts, and to be accepted by him who is accepted by Christ. When on the Jericho road a church is confronted by God with a sinner who has become saint under the voice of her gospel proclamation, she may not because of the possible inferior spiritual status of the convert pass on to the other side and forsake him to the care of some church she regards as less consistently Christian than herself.

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The thesis of this article has been, simply stated, merely this: a church must *be* a neighbor, *i.e.*, preach the gospel to her neighbors, and any neighbor thus brought to Christ must be accepted by the church that thus brought him to Christ.

I know that this will create problems, cause inconveniences, necessitate pastoral care and teaching and even on occasions disciplinary action, and also imperil the regularity of our religious patterns. I shall consider these matters in a subsequent article. For now it is enough to remind ourselves that to be a neighbor the Good Samaritan had to pay a price and suffer inconvenience. And the command is still to be heard: "Go thou and do likewise"!

Bavinck Points the Way

by Bastian Kruithof

THERE WAS a time when our theological eyes looked across the sea. The inner prompting of "Look Homeward, Angel" gave us a sense of security, for, after all, we were strangers in a new land. We were also, in a sense, pioneers, carrying precious religious and intellectual baggage, a heritage of those who had dared to pioneer in the old world.

Today there are those who are not so sure that some of the "new" old world thinking in Reformed spheres is for us. These look with apprehension at some developments. Various factors may account for this reaction. It may be that as a group we have not caught the real spirit of the "Reformation reforming." It could be that somewhere along the way we have been consciously, or perhaps unconsciously, stymied by a creeping Fundamentalism which we deny in theory but accept in practice. It is also possible that we are possessed with both fear and anger, fear of losing what we have, and anger at being constantly challenged by a revival of spirited theological thinking that makes us gasp rather than grasp. There is also the possibility that, living in an economy of abundance in a world of worldliness, we have measured our success more than our faithfulness. We have thrown up our walls, if not our hands, in the attempt to calm our fears and occasionally voice our anger.

That by divine grace we have done rather well is an undeniable fact. That by divine promptings we should do better is both fact and challenge. If we are satisfied with what we are and with what we have, there is always the danger, fully as grave as others we magnify, of losing what we have, and of becoming less than what we are. There is warning in the parable of the tame old duck whose wings became useless and who was fairly content with the state it was in.

In such a state it becomes possible that our chief concern is to hold the fort against friend and foe, not distinguishing as Christians should, but lumping together all those who do not share exactly our mores, traditions, customs, and blood. Holding the fort, we do not sally forth. We become like ships in protecting harbors and easily forget that harbors are for embarkation as well as for docking, that ships are made for adventurous seas.

In such a state our spiritual illness may be "paralysis from analysis"; our motto, "Come weal or woe, my status is quo." In theory we may confess a Holy, Catholic Church, but in practice we would not really have it so. It can become a pastime to gather around such idols of the market place as cliches and mediocrity. Confusing safety with salvation we may show our preference for those who ruffle no surfaces, and decide against brave hearts who serve sincerely with no ruffles. We very likely hail as heroes the courageous prophets and reformers but are ill at ease with those who would follow in their spirit.

ALL THIS is a sort of prelude to an evaluation of Herman Bavinck, the Christian scholar and gentleman with whose thoughts I have been on intimate terms for the last few years. We do well to listen to him, even if we think we have been listening to him. For Bavinck came to grips with the greatest, most comprehensive problem on our list: The Relation of Christianity and Culture. He speaks to our complacency and our unrest, to our fears and suspicions, to our faith and our loyalty.

Bavinck was exceedingly well qualified to speak with conviction and authority on this problem. He was first of all a simple child of God who at the twenty-fifth anniversary of his professorship could speak of what he had lost, won, and kept. He had kept the faith; and it had kept him. He was also a theologian (*Godgeleerde*) in the best sense of the word, and with a philosophic bent. Moreover, he was a scholar immersed in his field. Again and again in his works he runs the whole gamut from the Greek thinkers to the thinkers of his day. And he was very fair. No opponent ever suffered unjustly at his hands. The research student finds himself writing the word "fairness" in many a margin of the voluminous works. His kind and just considerations were the fruit of his irenic spirit. He was always interested in truth, never in libeling or labeling anyone.

This is not saying that he was weak in his convictions. He held to them strongly but as a theologian of the heart as well as of the mind. His students respected, admired, and loved him. His opponents recognized his stature. In conversation with Prof. Mr. P.S. Gerbrandy, whose mustache twitched and moved like Birnamwood to Dunsinane, and who

Bavinck Points the Way — Continued

was Prime Minister of the Dutch Government in Exile; in conversation with Dr. H. Dooyeweerd and Dr. J.H. Bavnick, I heard warmest tributes. I was told that one day in the midst of a class lecture Bavinck was overcome by his emotions to such an extent that with misted eyes he left the class room at once. That gives us an insight into the life of a scholar who also had a heart.

A man of great faith, of inner tension and conflict, of modesty and discretion, "he understood the holy art of listening," as G. Brillenburg Wurth says. No finer accolade has ever been given, no warmer tribute has ever been written for any man.

For Bavinck was a listener, a man with two ears and one mouth. And because he was such a listener, he has so much to say. The advice to his students can well be taken to heart when we have become students after our school days. He said, "I do not ask that you solve the problem, but I ask that you begin to posit it clearly." Such a man, who kept such advice before himself constantly, deserved the the respect he received as a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences. He deserved the words spoken at his grave by Dr. T. Hoekstra who said, "He was great in understanding, deep in powers of thought, broad in view, spacious in heart, but narrow in his life. What he tolerated in others he did not tolerate in himself." And what Dr. F.W. Grosheide wrote of him is also true: "Bavinck was a scholar in the full sense of the word. Serious and careful, sometimes perhaps too careful, he went on his way."

At the centenary of Bavinck's birth in December, 1954, religious periodicals honored the occasion with many articles on his person and work, and on his lasting influence. Among other things these writers stressed the relationship between Bavinck's sterling and magnetic Christian personality and his scholarship. His wide interests reveal that nothing human was foreign to him and that he felt at home in the illumination of divine revelation.

It would be rewarding to have from Bavinck's mind and heart a book dealing with the relation of Christianity and culture. But perhaps it is more rewarding still to be able to dig his thoughts out of all his writings and speeches which number more than fifty items. That way we find rich materials in his *magnum opus, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* his Stone Lectures, *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring* (*The Philosophy of Revelation*), his works on psychology and education, his scholarly addresses, and even in the most unexpected places such as his popular devotional writings. The research student, delving into all that wealth, finds his pages growing into a full-sized book.

In his basic believing and thinking Bavinck is our contemporary. His influence is still felt in the Netherlands, South Africa, and the United States. For the common good of Reformed thinking everywhere it should continue to be felt.

It is challenging to speculate how this Dutch theologian would have reacted to Neo-Orthodoxy in all its variations. We can be sure that he would have been masterful in both agreement and disagreement, and always the Christian gentleman, bending over backwards to be appreciative and fair. I think he would be cheering on such men as Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, Dr. J. H. Bavinck, Dr. J. Waterink, and others. He would cheer them on because they are men of his spirit, men who know Whom and what they believe, and who go forward courageously under the impact of the Reformation that is far from spent.

Bavinck is our contemporary because his thinking fits into the framework of present-day wrestling with "The Enduring Problem" as Richard Niebuhr calls it. A listing of the names of several authors and their works indicates the aliveness of the problem. There are C.N. Cochrane's *Christianity and Culture,* 1940; T.S. Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society,* 1939, and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture,* 1948; Christopher Dawson's *Religion and Culture,* 1947 and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture,* 1950; Emil Brunner's *Christianity and Civilization,* 1948; John Baillie's *What Is Christian Civilization?,* 1945, and *The Belief In Progress,* 1951; Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture,* 1951; Emile Cailliet's *The Christian Approach to Culture,* 1953. We should add S.J. Ridderbos's *De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper,* 1947, and could add scores of others.

If Bavinck does not answer all our questions, nor his own, in assessing the relation of Christianity and culture, he nevertheless leads us farther into "the thinking of the thought divine." B. Wielenga puts it well when he says, "As far as I know, no one has pictured the new culture, the changed world so broadly and with such majestic comprehensiveness in their meaning for Christianity as the knower of history."

Bavinck, the daring knower, points the way. In his research he leaves no stone unturned. In his irenic militancy there are no bad blows. In his basic convictions he stands firm. Dr. W.H. Vander Pol, a Roman Catholic, thinking especially of the Stone Lectures, compares him with Barth in that both contend against any monistic, immanentistic, humanistic theology and religiousness.

Bavinck, the humble believer, points the way. Always the sworn enemy of mere speculation, and proud sectarianism, he held that Christianity means the assurance of faith. He saw the grave danger of no longer confessing one's faith, but of believing one's confession. From him we learn again that faith

s not at all to be equated with narrowness of heart nd mind. On the contrary, it must bear fruit in nswering to one's calling in the world. It is fed nd inspired by the love of God, and expresses itself n love to God and one's fellowmen.

Permeating his scholarliness there breathes a warm, personal trust in God, that living faith which he respected so much in the simple lives of the unlettered saints.

For Bavinck the Christian pilgrimage is the way of storm, but also of joy because of the certainty of faith. Ever new conflicts arise, but victory is assured. Through all the ages the Christian witness repeats one major theme: the triumph of grace.

Genesis and Science in John Calvin

by Dirk Jellema

THE RECENT discussions regarding the ideas of Dr. J. Lever, of the Calvinist Free University of Amsterdam, have raised several questions. One of them, and an important one, is the relation between Genesis and science. Some light may perhaps be thrown on the question by considering what John Calvin has to say in his *Commentary on Genesis*.

It is probably unnecessary to prove or demonstrate, to *Reformed Journal* readers, that Calvin stood firmly and unequivocally for the infallibility of Scripture. This emphasis appears again and again throughout his writings.

Calvin also emphasizes the idea of Scripture's accommodation to human capacity, both generally and also specifically with regard to science. God, says Calvin, *accommodates* his holy revelation to the capacities of the human beings who receive it.[1] Let us see what Calvin means by this general idea of accommodation, and then see how he applies it to Genesis and science. Some citations from the *Commentary on Genesis* follow:[2]

(p. 79) *The history of the creation . . . is the book of the unlearned.*

(84) *It must be remembered that Moses does not speak with scientific acuteness.*

(85) *For as it became a theologian, he* [*Moses*] *had respect to us rather than to the stars.*

(119) *Moses* (*in my judgment*) *accommodated his topography* [*i.e. geography*] *to the capacity of his age.*

(186) . . . an indulgence to the rudeness [i.e. lack of learning] of that ancient people.

(282) *Moses . . . for the purpose of accommodating himself to the capacity of an ignorant people.*

(391) *introduces Him as speaking according to the manner of men.*

(II, 15) *Moses did not speak scientifically, but in a popular style.*

We see, then (many more such expressions could be cited) that in Calvin's view God often had to *accommodate* revelation to the capacities of the unlearned Hebrews who received it; and that this applies not only in the moral and religious spheres, but also with regard to science.

We are interested here primarily in Calvin's attitude towards Genesis and science, so let us try and narrow the matter down. Were there, in Calvin's day, any "conflicts between science and Genesis" which were gleefully seized on by "Modernists," and which led "Fundamentalists" to denounce the findings of science? Indeed so. Sixteenth-century science being what it was, the supposed conflict occurred not in the field of biology, but in the field of astronomy.

Many people thought that the findings of scientists in the field of astronomy conflicted with Genesis. There were "Modernists" who pointed happily to the apparent conflicts; and there were "Fundamentalists" who insisted that if such be the case, a literalistic interpretation of Genesis must be upheld, godless scientists notwithstanding.

Calvin, in line with his stress on two things — first, the infallibility of Scripture, and second, its accommodation to human capacity — views the alleged conflict as a pseudo-conflict, based on false ideas of inspiration on the part of both "Modernists" and "Fundamentalists." That such is Calvin's view will become more clear with an examination of Calvin's remarks on some of the "conflicts."

LET US BEGIN with Calvin's words on the question of the rainbow. Some pious and sincere theologians held that the rainbow did not exist be-

1. This general idea of accommodation is clearly expressed by A. Kuyper (*The Work of the Holy Spirit*, New York, 1900, p. 72) as follows: ". . . God must condescend to our limitations. For the consciousness is subject to the mental conditions of the world in which it lives. A negro, *e.g.*, can have no other consciousness than that developed by his environment and acquired by his language . . . Hence the divine speaking is always adapted to the capacities of the person addressed."

2. Page references, here and in following citations, are to the two-volume Eerdmans edition of Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis* (1554). We have taken the liberty of giving "scientist" where the 1847 translation we are citing gives "philosopher": this reflects Calvin's meaning more accurately. The "natural philosopher" of 1847 English is the "scientist" of modern usage.

Genesis and Science in John Calvin — Continued

fore the Flood, for did not God give man the rainbow after the Flood (Gen. 9:14)? And shouldn't Genesis be trusted rather than godless scientists? Calvin disposes of this so-called "conflict" briefly (emphasis here and elsewhere is ours—D.J.).

> (299) *"I do set my bow in the cloud." From these words certain eminent theologians have been induced to deny that there was any rainbow before the deluge; which is frivolous ...* it is not for us to contend with scientists regarding the rainbow.

Genesis 1:15 was used by some to show that Genesis and science were in conflict: astronomers had proved that the moon shines by reflected light, and is not really a "light," as Genesis says. Did Calvin reply that we must hold to a literalistic understanding of Moses' words, that godless scientists shall never deprive us of our God-given faith, and so forth? No, here again, he regards the supposed conflict as a pseudo-conflict.

> (85) *It is well again to repeat what I have said before, that* it is not here scientifically discussed *how great the sun is in the heaven, and how great, or how little, is the moon ... as it became a theologian, he [Moses] had respect to us rather than to the stars. Nor in truth was he ignorant of the fact that the moon had no sufficient brightness to enlighten the earth, unless it borrowed from the sun; but he deemed it enough to declare what we all may plainly perceive, that the moon is a dispenser of light to us.*

But what about the Genesis reference to the waters above the heavens? Were not the "Modernists" correct when they stated that science had proved that Genesis was wrong, and that therefore the Bible was not infallible? No, says Calvin, this is again a pseudo-conflict, based on the wrong notion that Moses is speaking scientifically in Genesis.

> (79) *"Let there be a firmament ... and let it divide the waters from the waters." ... from which words arises a grave difficulty. For it appears opposed to common sense, and quite incredible, that there should be waters above the heaven. Hence some resort to allegory, and philosophize concerning angels; but quite beside the purpose. For, to my mind,* this is a certain principle, *that nothing is here treated but the visible [i.e. apparent] form of the world.* He who would learn astronomy and other recondite arts, let him go elsewhere.

In other words, what Moses does is to accommodate himself to the nonscientific outlook of the Hebrews of his time. Calvin goes on:

> *Here the Spirit of God would teach all men without exception, and therefore what Gregory declares falsely in vain respecting statues and pictures is truly applicable to the history of the creation [in Genesis]: namely, that* it is the book of the unlearned.

And Calvin continues — and one is tempted to speculate whether these words may have at least some application to present-day controversies:

> *The assertion of some, that they embrace by faith what they have read [in Genesis] concerning the waters above the heavens, notwithstanding their ignorance respecting them, is not in accordance with the design of Moses.*

CALVIN insists, then, on two things: first, the infallibility of Scripture, and second, the accommodation of Scripture to human capacity. Therefore the idea — held by both "Modernists" and "Fundamentalists" in his day — that Genesis claims to give scientific statements, is rejected by Calvin.

This comes out quite clearly in Calvin's remarks on Genesis 1:13-16, which seemed to give a picture of the universe which was not in accordance with the findings of science. Once again, Calvin sees the alleged conflict as a pseudo-conflict, based on the erroneous idea that Moses is speaking scientifically:

> (86) *I have said that Moses does* not *here subtly descant as a scientist, on the secrets of nature, as may be seen in these words [Gen. 1:13-16]. First he assigns a place in the expanse of the heaven to the planets and stars; but astronomers make a distinction of spheres, and, at the same time, that the fixed stars have their proper place in the firmament. Moses makes two great luminaries; but astronomers prove, by conclusive reasons, that the star of Saturn, which on account of its great distance appears the least of all, is greater than the moon.* Here lies the difference: Moses wrote in a popular style *things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labor whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend ... Because he was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned,* he could not otherwise fulfill his office *than by descending to this grossest method of interpretation. ... If the astronomer inquires regarding the* actual *dimensions of the stars, he will find the moon to be less than Saturn; but this is something abstruse, for to the common sight it appears differently. Moses therefore adapts his discourse to common usage.*

CALVIN'S rejection of the idea — held by both the "Modernists" and the "Fundamentalists" of his day — that Moses spoke scientifically, and that Genesis could therefore be quoted as opposing contemporary science, appears also in the following passage. The reader should bear in mind the two

hings to which Calvin firmly held: the infallibility f Scripture as well as the accommodation of Scripure to human capacity. It should be remembered hat Calvin thought of his view of accommodation s a defense *against* Modernism.

(256) . . . *We know that Moses everywhere spoke in a homely style, to suit the capacity of the people, and that he purposely refrained from acute disputations, which might savor of the schools and of deeper learning. I can by no means persuade myself that, contrary to his ordinary method, he* [*here*] *uses geometrical subtlety. Certainly, in the first chapter* [*of Genesis,*] he did not treat scientifically of the stars, as a scientist would do; *but he called them, in a popular manner,* according to their appearance to the uneducated, rather than according to truth, *"two great lights."*

One final point. In Calvin's day, since nodern biology had not yet been born, there was o so-called conflict between Genesis and biology. But one comment of Calvin's does perhaps bear on ne point at issue in the Lever controversy. Lever, t is said, holds that man's soul was added to a body which was developed from the lower animals; and, t is said, this can hardly be called "creation." Now, ever's theory is a modern restatement of an older dea which occurs with medieval Christian philosohers: that it was God's joining of human *form* vith pre-existing *matter* which constituted the cretion of man, and that such a joining *can* be called creation." On this point, Calvin comments as ollows:

(89) *A question here arises out of the word "created." For we have before contended that because the world was created, it was made out of nothing; but now Moses says that things formed from other matter were created. . . . I therefore do not restrict the creation here spoken of to the work of the fifth day, but rather suppose it to refer to that shapeless and confused mass which was the fountain of the whole world. God, then, it is said, created whales and other fishes, not that the* beginning *of their creation is to be reckoned from the moment in which they receive their form; but because they are comprehended in the universal matter which was made out of nothing. So that,* with respect to species, form only was added to them; but creation is nevertheless a term truly used *respecting both the whole and the parts.*

We can now perhaps summarize the results of our investigation of Calvin's views on the so-called conflict between Genesis and the science of his day. (1) Calvin viewed the alleged conflict as a pseudo-conflict; (2) which arose from an erroneous belief that Moses was speaking scientifically in Genesis; (3) and from the failure to recognize not only the infallibility of Scripture, but also its accommodation to human capacity.[3]

These conclusions seem to us to be proved by our citations from Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis.* We would, however, invite further comment.[4] We may be wrong. And we feel also that Calvin's ideas may shed some small light on present controversy; but here again, we may be in error.

In any case, we hope that *Reformed Journal* readers may be interested in the above presentation of some of Calvin's ideas, and may feel moved to comment on them.

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3. It is doubtless unnecessary to remark that Calvin's idea of accommodation should not be confused with the so-called "accommodation theory" of the rationalist theologians of the 18th century, which was devised in order to tear down the infallibility of Scripture.

4. Especially since this article is drawn from some preliminary notes towards a more extensive examination of "Calvin and Science." Any suggestions would be most welcome.

Cornelius Bode

by J. G. Vanden Bosch

It was Sunday morning. The parson, accompanied by two members of his church, was on his way to a mission station to conduct preaching services. Seeing a man, not a member of his congregation, in the field busily engaged in cutting his oats, he forthwith drove his span of spirited broncos across the field toward the man, and pleaded with him to unhitch his team. When the man proposed to drive to the end of his field, the parson insisted that he unhitch on the spot and stop desecrating the Sabbath. The man did so. The parson who thus showed himself to be a faithful witness of his Lord was none other than the Reverend Cornelius Bode, subject of our sketch.

Almost from the very beginning of its existence there was a German strain in the Christian Reformed denomination. Some of those composing this strain came from Graasfschap Bentheim and, settling in Michigan, mingled easily with the Hollanders among whom they lived. Others came from

Cornelius Bode — Continued

Ostfriesland and, settling in the mid-West, clung to their German traditions more tenaciously than did the Graafschappers and made more persistent use of their native language, generally High German in their church services, Low German in their homes and social life. The first church made up of German immigrants was at Ridott, Illinois, the second at Wellsburg, Iowa, organized respectively in 1866 and 1867. As time went on a few more such churches came into being until there were enough to be constituted a classis. Prominent in the churches composing this classis was the Reverend Cornelius Bode. Were it only for this fact, his name deserves to be remembered.

CORNELIUS BODE was born August 12, 1843, near Emden, a seaport on the northwest coast of Germany, the Dollaart, a branch of the North Sea, separating it from the Dutch city of Delfzijl by only a few miles. Emden was a city of some importance in the early history of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands. During the persecutions of the latter half of the sixteenth century many Dutch people confessing the Reformed faith found Emden to be a city of refuge. Thus it came about that the first real synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands was held in this city, a synod that bears the distinction of having virtually adopted the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession as the official standards of the Reformed faith. It also adopted a church order. Some centuries later the Secession of 1834 in the low countries had its repercussions also in Ostfriesland with the result that a few Reformed churches came into existence. During part of the present century Emden was the seat of theological education for the Reformed churches of Graafschap Bentheim and Ostfriesland, pastor Jaeger being the professor. The Christian Reformed Church in America was indebted to Ostfriesland for several of its ministers, such as Cornelius and Henry Bode, J. Timmermann, G. L. Hoefker, D. H. Kromminga, W. R. Smidt, and perhaps a few others.

Near this historic spot Cornelius Bode was born and partly reared. His parents were plain farmers who did not succumb to the liberalism prevalent in their day, but very consciously embraced the Calvinistic faith. Next to his parents Cornelius owed much, spiritually, to a God-fearing teacher and an orthodox minister. Already in early youth the truth took hold of him and lodged in his soul, but the assurance that he was a redeemed child of God was not his until several years later after much uneasiness and wrestling in prayer. In one of his anxious moments when he was struggling with the problem of his personal salvation he cried out, "Lord, have mercy on me; if thou wilt show mercy I will serve thee in spreading the gospel." But th promise was the cause of still intenser struggle Mountains of difficulty arose in his mind, and h prayed that he might be released from it. Was h not married and was it not his duty to provide fo his growing family? Where would the means com from to enable him to devote several years to study In spite of the excuses invented, the urge to preac the gospel disturbed him with increasing persistence In his desperation he at one time told the Lord tha he would rather be translated into the heavenl Jerusalem than tread the pathway, so difficult, o preparation for the ministry. Finally he could re sist no longer and surrendered to what he deeme to be the sure promptings of the Spirit. Thus, onl in the way of much agonizing and prayer did h make this important major choice of his life.

IN 1854, at the age of eleven, the boy Cornelius came to America with his parents, who settled on farm near Ridott, Illinois. When he was twenty five, he married Hilkea Ammermann, also a nativ of Ostfriesland, and for a livelihood resorted to til ing the soil on his own account. Meanwhile he wa a charter member of the Christian Reformed Churc and served as one of its deacons. Although he ha taken to farming for a livelihood, he was not alto gether disobedient to the heavenly vision, for h took some private lessons with his pastor, the Re William H. Frieling. After six years of successfu farming, prosperous years in which he had laid u enough money to support himself and his famil during his years of study, he sold his possessions an left for Muskegon, Michigan, to sit at the feet o Rev. D. J. Vander Werp. This was in 1874. Th following year, owing to the illness of Rev. Vande Werp, he, together with his fellow student, Gee Broene, moved to Grand Rapids to continue h theological training with Rev. G. E. Boer.

In 1879, having studied four and one half year Cornelius Bode, together with T. M. Vanden Bosc graduated and was declared a candidate for th ministry. The recipient of two calls, one from Vog Center, the other from Niekerk, Bode accepted th latter. Thus at thirty-six years of age he was o dained and began his career as a messenger of th cross, as minister of the divine Word. At Nieke he labored with much blessing for almost eig years. In answer to the eighth call he took th pastorate of the church at Harrison, South Dakot where his preaching wrought marked changes entire families. Ackley, Iowa, enjoyed his ministr tions from 1891 to 1903, and Kanawha, Iowa, fro 1903 to his death in 1917, both bilingual churche Nearly thirty-eight years he was granted th privilege of laboring as an ambassador of Christ

Rev. Bode threw himself heart and soul into his work. Because the love of Christ constrained him he loved to preach. He never wearied his audiences with profound theological discussions but endeavored to make people understand the main truths of Scripture, especially those setting forth the way of salvation. Pastor Bode seemed untiring in his willingness to attend to the needs of his people. He conducted special catechism classes in outlying sections of his parish. If anyone was in distress and needed counsel, if anyone was ill, no weather was too severe, no distance too great, no road too difficult to keep him from hastening to respond to the call for help and comfort. He would neglect his own physical needs to care for others.

THERE WAS much of the evangelist in Rev. Bode. His friendly and open nature engendered love and good will wherever he went. By his kindness he endeared himself to all. It was not without reason that many who knew him well, even among his fellow ministers, affectionately spoke of him as Uncle C. It was not hard for him to accost sinners and to exhort them to repent and to believe in Christ. He was not ashamed of witnessing for his Savior. One day as he was conducting a catechism class, a working man entered the room. Rev. Bode interrupted the lesson long enough to ascertain whether the stranger knew Christ, so one of the catechumens wrote. Conductors on railroad trains knew him as the preacher who talked to them about salvation. The village drunk he warned repeatedly, telling him that a drunkard cannot enter the Kingdom unless he repent and break with his sin. Users of profanity he was sure to rebuke. At one time he admonished a man for using profane language in his presence. Being rudely told to mind his own business, Rev. Bode warned the man that God would punish him. A few days later the man died of lockjaw.

Rev. Bode believed in home missions or church extension. During his pastorate at Kanawha he served two preaching stations, one in a schoolhouse eight miles away. Most of those attending this station joined the Kanawha church. The other was at a place twenty miles distant where he preached on alternate Sunday mornings, after which he hurried home with only a sandwich for his dinner eaten on the way, and, two men standing ready to unhitch his team, he stepped from the buckboard into his own pulpit. He traveled far and wide with his broncos — he was fond of horses and never owned an automobile — in all manner of weather, even sub-zero, and over difficult roads in his zeal to win souls for Christ and to extend the borders of his denomination. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination he was able to say that he had been instrumental in organizing fourteen congregations, six because of distance without the assistance of properly delegated officials and eight in the regular manner, and that he had preached every Sunday but one when he was prevented by illness. There was no room on his calendar for vacations. Sometimes zeal would outrun discretion and he exposed himself to the criticism that he had not sufficient respect for rules of procedure established by classis and synod. To his mind there were exceptions to even good rules.

Radiant kindness made Rev. Bode effective in dealing with delinquent or offended parishioners. Tact led to his being resourceful. Shrewd use of the social teacup, the charm of which no Ostfriesian can withstand, mellowed hostile feelings and paved the way for a frank and sane discussion of the difficulty, and the touch of his hand on the arm of the stubborn or irate person generally caused reason to prevail over passion and to bring about surrender or reconciliation. Rev. Bode allowed nothing to stand in the way of gaining the good will of people.

Kanawha's railroad is a branch line and ran no passenger trains. Passengers had to be content with traveling in a coach hooked to a freight train or in a caboose. If the freight derailed, as it sometimes did, Rev. Bode did not think that his ministerial dignity would suffer when he helped the crew to restore the train to the rails, nor did it. It did not matter that the small young congregation at Kanawha could not welcome him and his family to its manse; he purchased lots and built his own home. And yet this man so kind and helpful at times was blunt and fearless in rebuking those who in his opinion were wrong or published extreme views in the denominational paper as his occasional brief contributions to *De Wachter* in earlier years show.

Rev. Bode had some disagreeable experiences in his ministry. Five times his life had been in imminent danger, so he tells us in a biographical essay, but what the nature of these dangers was he does not explain. Undoubtedly, one of the most painful of his experiences came to him at the close of his career. During the first World War Rev. Bode was suspected of being pro-German and was harassed by intolerant patriots. Fortunately, his heavenly Father graciously called his servant home to enjoy everlasting safety and peace. Nevertheless, though his career had its disagreeable moments, it also abounded in rich blessings. The walnut trees which he planted with his own hands, have long survived his mortal frame and still adorn the streets of Kanawha. The results of his spiritual plantings will outlast time, for they are treasured in heaven.

Cornelius Bode — Continued

WHEN REV. BODE died, he was almost seventy-four years old; his widow was spared till she was one hundred and two. Since her husband's death she lived alone at Austinville, Iowa, to be near some of her children. Enjoying the use of her mental faculties to the very end, she fondly read her church papers, a fact that showed her deep interest in the affairs of her denomination. Her departure was even more sudden than that of her husband. She was, and she was not, for the Lord took her.

Rev. and Mrs. Bode were the parents of seven children: John, sometime an elder in a church at Kelsey, Iowa; Richard, sometime a deacon in the church at Austinville, Iowa; Henry, an honored minister in the Christian Reformed denomination; William, also a minister and for fourteen years president of Grundy College; Mamie, wife of Peter Limburg of Austinville; Anna, wife of John C. Arends of Alexander, Iowa; and Lilly, who died when she was twelve years old.

By heredity German, Rev. Bode remained so in spite of the fact that sixteen years of his life were spent among Hollanders. As the maxim has it, blood creeps where it cannot freely flow. His theological education and his first two pastorates required the use of the Holland language. But no sooner did he assume charge of the Ackley church, a bilingual one, than his love for the German reasserted itself, and his desire to labor among German immigrants and their descendants became a settled purpose, if not a passion. Most religious Germans are Lutherans, but at least those professing the Reformed faith should be kept from drifting away from their confessional moorings, and others should, if possible, be won.

HISTORY sometimes surprises us with the unexpected. A native of the Netherlands, Adrian Van Vliet by name and a tailor by trade, arrived in America in 1847, and, having lived successively in New York City, in St. Louis, Missouri, and Galena, Illinois, finally settled at Platteville, Wisconsin. A member of the state church in Holland, he joined the Presbyterian fold upon arriving in America. Urged by his friends, he sought ordination and without any special training was, in 1852, admitted to the ministry for the special purpose of preaching the gospel among Germans. He accepted a call to a German evangelical church in Dubuque, Iowa, which two years later allied itself with the Presbyterian communion. So impressed was he with the spiritual needs of Germans that he forthwith, before a year had gone by, undertook the training of young men for the ministry in a private theological seminary. This self-imposed task he continued to do for twelve years until in 1864 his purely personal project was taken under the care of the Presbyteries of Dubuque, Iowa, and Dane, Wisconsin and was given its first formal name, The German Theological School of the Northwest. Thus Rev. Van Vliet was the founder of what has developed into the University of Dubuque. It is in this school that E. L. Meinders, a brother-in-law of Rev. Bode, G. L. Hoefker, and Henry C. Bode received their theological education, names well known in Christian Reformed annals.

The labors of Rev. Van Vliet were blessed. Through his efforts several Presbyterian churches were established in the mid-West, so that he is called the father of German Presbyterianism. In fact, the influence of his labors was felt even in Zeeland, Michigan, where there existed during the 1860's a flourishing Presbyterian congregation composed entirely of Hollanders and served by graduates of his school. In the neighborhood of Ackley there were several thriving German congregations. Even the Christian Reformed church at Wellsburg, not far from Ackley, was the result of the missionary efforts of two of Rev. Van Vliet's students, E. L. Meinders and J. Arends. Is it any wonder that Rev. C. Bode, observing all this, was inspired by the example of Rev. Van Vliet and began to be motivated by a similar urge? It is not hard to understand Rev. Bode's zeal to do missionary work among the Germans and to win them for the church he loved. When in 1916 Grundy College was founded with his son William as president, he was a happy man, for he viewed the school as an effective means in realizing his ideal. Most assuredly, his aim was a noble one and worthy of realization, but it seems that his efforts were not especially fruitful partly because the field had been preempted by the Presbyterians and others. Rev. Van Vliet had anticipated Rev. Bode's vision by several decades.

With what zeal and energy the Reverend Cornelius Bode labored, with how much sacrifice and privation, we of the present generation can scarcely appreciate. The Church is deeply indebted to all these early ministers, who, toiling with meager preparation among pioneers, themselves were pioneers in the domain of the spiritual and bore the heat of the day and the cool of the night. The most generous promptings of our grateful spirits are insufficient to honor them with proper recognition. What we would fain do but cannot God does, and infinitely more. The reward of grace is theirs. And so, as we in our imagination tarry at the grave of Rev. Bode in rural Ackley's quiet churchyard, we, hearing a voice from heaven, reverently listen to it saying: Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them. Bowing in adoration, we say, So be it.

Notes and Letters . . .

DEAR SIRS:

Our profound thanks to both the Rev. Edward Bossenbroek and *The Reformed Journal* for the courageous and scholarly article "Reluctantly Endured" (January issue). . .

We pray that other men like the Rev. Bossenbroek will feel the urge to unmask other of our . . . shibboleths, particularly on the subject of qualification for church membership.

Thankfully yours,
Leo Peters
Grand Rapids, Mich.

DEAR SIRS:

We now have had two long articles from two of our pastors in the *Journal* about the Divorce Problem. . . .

These brethren, we believe, overlooked the more important points. We must look at this whole problem concretely, not in the abstract. . .

How can we save the Bride, the Body of our Lord, from this evil of easy divorces, unbiblical divorces? Judges may give divorces for six reasons, while God says, "What God puts together let not man put asunder." Must we lower the doors and say we will cooperate with the world? Will we let unbiblical divorced people, who marry again, join the Body?

We are then giving a bad example to our young people. The sanctity of marriage will go down. It will lead us farther down in the world, brethren. We must be so careful, more than any other denomination, because we believe in the believers and their seed. . . .

Is it so hard to find God's will in this, brethren? Paul says marriage is a picture of Christ and his Church. Can Christ be divided from his Church? Never! Death alone parts us, the form states. So when a person gets an unbiblical divorce and marries again, he sins. When I steal a farm, I sin. . . . The judge can marry an unbiblically divorced person, but he may not; he sins. That is why our pastors will never do it. And before God they are never married. . . .

It is hard to be a Christian. But if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. . . .

Maxwell tells in his book, *Abandoned to Christ,* about a young girl who served with the underground in World War II in Serbia, Europe. The underground men never came back alive. If they were caught by Germans, they had a vial of poison on their person. When the young lady reported for duty the leader said to her, "We scratched your name off the list, my girl; who joins us we consider dead." That is it, brethren. We died with Him Paul says. God tells us to do things impossible for us to do, to leave a man we may not have. Do you know what Jesus said? "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

Let us look at this problem as a whole. We live in the last evil days. The Bride is in great danger. As the world grows more wicked let her grow more holy.

The road, now more than ever, is not a path of roses, but through

(*Continued on back page*)

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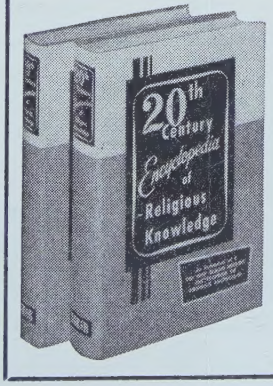

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Notes and Letters — Continued

blood and many tears. It is hard for all of us; but so much more so for people who fell in the sin of marrying again after they were unlawfully divorced.

And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.

D. Kort
Oak Lawn, Ill.

SIRS:

Having come fresh from a re-reading of a number of articles which have appeared in recent issues of the *Journal* I wish to express my gratitude to those responsible — editors, other contributors and publisher — for them. Like others, I count the *Journal* one of the most helpful papers that I read. If our entire Reformed community would adopt its attitude of courageous and humble self-criticism our blessings might become greater than we now dare hope for.

Of the many excellent contributions in past issues that come to my mind I wish to cite one, the high relevance and perspicuity of which merits re-reading *and* consideration. It is the letter in the Nov. (1955) issue by Lester De Koster on "A Call for Discussion." I trust that by now *Journal* readers are sufficiently accustomed to good reading that none missed the thrust of that poignant piece of correspondence.

Respectfully,
M. Eugene Osterhaven
Holland, Mich.

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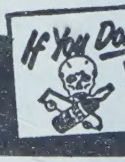

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